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Salaries of State Legislators (State Measure No. 1); Sewer User Service Charge Increase (City Measure No. 53)

City Club of Portland (Portland, Or.)

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PORTLAND
City Club
BULLETIN

Mayfair Ballroom • Benson Hotel
Friday . . . 12:10 P. M.

PORTLAND, OREGON - Vol. 40, No. 48 - April 29, 1960

*Printed in this Bulletin for presentation, discussion and action
at this week's meeting, April 29, 1960:*

**REPORT
ON
SALARIES OF STATE LEGISLATORS
(STATE BALLOT MEASURE NO. 1)**

The Committee: DON FRISBEE, CRAIG KELLEY, JOHN NICHOLS,
NELSON NILES, M.D., and JAMES INGWERSEN, *Chairman*.

and

**REPORT
ON
SEWER USER SERVICE CHARGE INCREASE
(City Measure No. 53)**

The Committee: FERRIS F. BOOTHE, S. EDWARD BYE, DR. EARL DRYDEN,
ROBERT R. KNIPE and KENNETH KLARQUIST, *Chairman*.

*"To inform its members and the community in public matters and to
arouse in them a realization of the obligations of citizenship."*

**REPORT
ON
SALARIES OF STATE LEGISLATORS
(SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 25)
(STATE BALLOT MEASURE NO. 1)**

PURPOSE: To amend Constitution by increasing salaries of state legislators from \$600 per year, plus mileage, to \$2100 per year.

TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS,
THE CITY CLUB OF PORTLAND:

At the present time, Oregon state legislators receive an annual salary of \$600 per year—\$50.00 per month—and compensation for travel at the rate of 10 cents per mile for one trip per session to Salem from their homes and return.

Under the proposed constitutional amendment, the legislators would receive \$2100 per year, or \$175 per month, but travel allowances would be eliminated.

In both instances, legislators would be reimbursed for basic expenses incurred in connection with their interim committee duties but would not be entitled to any reimbursement for any other expenses.

Statement of the Issue and Background:

This measure was passed jointly by the State Senate and the House of Representatives during the 1959 Legislature. It will be submitted to the people at the election on May 20, 1959.

Compensation of legislators was fixed by the Constitution when Oregon became a State. Until 1941, \$3.00 for each day was allowed, with limits of \$120.00 for a regular session and \$60.00 for a special session, plus \$3.00 for each 20 miles of travel to and from the session. The presiding officers received two-thirds of their per diem allowance extra. By a 1942 amendment, per diem was raised to \$8.00 per day, limited to 50 days for a regular session and 20 days for a special session, plus 10 cents per mile travel allowance. Presiding officers were allowed an extra \$4.00 per diem. By 1950 amendment, pay was raised to its present \$600.00 per year, plus 10 cents per mile, with the presiding officers receiving an additional \$200.00 per year. Under this 1950 amendment, legislators' pay covers not only the regular session every biennium, but also interim committee work and special sessions. (Prior to 1957 no special session had been held for 24 years.)

In 1954 a constitutional amendment to permit legislators' salaries to be prescribed by law was defeated by the voters, as also were measures of 1956 and 1958 proposing to change legislators' salaries to \$1200.00 per year.

Previous City Club committees reported favorably on the 1942 and 1950 ballot measures which were passed by the voters, as well as on the 1928, 1930, 1940, 1956 and 1958 amendments which were rejected by the voters.

Your Committee was informed that the proposed amendment has been given support from the League of Women Voters, Oregon State Grange, Oregon Farm Bureau Federation, Associated Oregon Industries, several labor organizations (including AFL-CIO and independent labor groups), both major political parties, Chambers of Commerce and Junior Chambers, among others.

Sources of Information:

The Committee solicited views from a number of legislators, including those who favored the measure and those who expressed opposition thereto when it was before the Legislature.

In addition, your Committee reviewed prior City Club reports on similar measures and referred to government reports and periodical literature dealing with this proposal, and studied the problems of compensation of state legislators in Oregon and elsewhere.

Various persons familiar with the Legislature were informally contacted by individual members of your Committee.

DISCUSSION

It is generally agreed that present compensation does not cover the necessary expenses of the legislators. The individuals and organizations contacted—including individual legislators who had voted against the resolution—were agreed that higher salaries for legislators are indicated. The House and Senate were in favor of the resolution by overwhelming majorities.

No substantial opposition to the measure was encountered by the Committee. The legislators who had voiced any disapproval were all in favor of granting greater compensation. They objected only on the grounds that legislators should not initiate such a change, that the budget should not be increased, or that allowance for expenses—rather than salaries—should be increased.

The Committee reviewed the arguments pro and con and felt fundamentally the decisive consideration was that the legislators are entitled to such an increase as fair recompense for their services, which include committee work for which they are not otherwise paid. The Committee therefore does not report here on materials included in the many previous City Club reports on this same problem. In reaching this position, the Committee did not feel that legislation has suffered for lack of adequate recompense heretofore, but it believes that this measure, if passed, will tend to promote 1) better continuity in office, which is probably desirable since a neophyte tends to be less qualified than a veteran, 2) over a period of time, better qualified legislators, probably in only an occasional instance with each election, but with significant cumulative effect.

The measure would increase the budget of the state less than one-tenth of one per cent.

RECOMMENDATION

Your Committee unanimously recommends that the City Club go on record as favoring passage of the proposed constitutional amendment to increase legislators' salaries, and urges a vote of #1 Yes.

Respectfully submitted,

DON FRISBEE
CRAIG KELLEY
JOHN NICHOLS
NELSON NILES, M.D.
JAMES INGWERSEN, *Chairman*

Approved April 13, 1950, by the Research Board for transmittal to the Board of Governors.

Received by the Board of Governors April 18, 1960, and ordered printed and submitted to the membership for discussion and action.

**REPORT
ON
SEWER USER SERVICE CHARGE INCREASE
(City Measure No. 53)**

Charter amendment permitting increase of sewer user service charges above present one-third by additional one-third of water bills, for location, construction, equipment and maintenance of sewage disposal and sewer treatment facilities to lessen stream pollution. Authorizing regulation and limitation of kinds of industrial wastes discharging into public sewers.

TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
THE CITY CLUB OF PORTLAND

Your Committee was appointed to review and report on the proposed amendment to the city charter which would empower the Council to impose an additional sewer user service charge to provide funds to enable completion of the sewage disposal system of the City of Portland.

Background

Portland is blessed in having two major rivers at her doorsteps. The Columbia River in particular is unique in that, at least in the stretch of river above Portland and its neighbors, it is one of the few major rivers in the United States that is safe for swimming and similar recreational uses. The sewage discharge from Portland and neighboring communities has, however, polluted the lower river and it is not at the present time classed as safe for swimming and similar recreational use though, obviously, it is so used at the present time.

In the case of the Willamette River, the situation is not as favorable. Upstream industries and communities are dumping waste in the river and the water arriving at Portland is polluted and unsafe for swimming. However, every community upstream from Portland except Monroe presently has a disposal plant and while a number of existing plants give only primary treatment to the sewage, the State Sanitary Authority is pressing the communities to provide secondary treatment and a number of communities such as Eugene, Salem and Newberg now have secondary treatment plants underway. As a result of this program the condition of the Willamette River has improved substantially over what it was a decade ago, and there is hope for continued improvement. On the other hand, can we expect that the upstream communities would continue their pollution control program if Portland did not make every effort to abate its pollution of the river? In view of the health hazards present in a polluted river, and of the presently extensive and anticipated expanded use of the lower Willamette for recreational purposes, it is imperative that the pollution be abated.

Prior to the 1940's all the sewage of the City of Portland was dumped untreated into the Willamette River. Under pressure of the State Sanitary Authority to install treatment plants, a \$12,000,000 bond issue for a sewage disposal system was passed in 1944 and a \$2,500,000 issue in 1952. It was hoped and intended that the funds from these bonds would enable the construction of a complete disposal system but rising costs and necessary extension and enlargement of the system because of population growth, annexations and need for more complete treatment prevented full completion. One witness heard by the committee stated that failure to complete the system now could be likened to carrying the ball to the ten-yard line and calling the team off the field with the goal line in sight.

The great bulk of the city's sewage is presently collected and given primary treatment* at the city's plant in North Portland. The effluent from this plant is discharged into the Columbia River. However, in a survey made in 1957 the State Sanitary Authority found that untreated sewage (both domestic and industrial) still being dumped into the lower Willamette River, was equivalent in B.O.D. to a city of 100,000. While there

*Primary treatment removes 60 to 70% of suspended solids and about 35% of the biochemical oxygen demand (B.O.D.) of the sewage. Secondary treatment removes about 85 to 95% of suspended solids and up to about 90% B.O.D.

are a number of minor sewers dumping directly into the river (the area on the east bank west of Grand Avenue, for example), the major areas in need of interceptors and treatment are Guild's Lake and Linnton.

Because of the volume of raw sewage being dumped into the lower Willamette River, it is highly polluted and because of the oxygen demand of the pollutants in times of low water, the oxygen content of the river frequently falls below that necessary to sustain fish life. Such conditions virtually wiped out the once extensive Fall runs of salmon in the Willamette River system. The abatement program has, however, improved conditions so that hope is seen for once again bringing up the runs. However, if Portland should continue to dump its raw sewage into the river, a series of low water years during the Fall run period would seriously curtail the current efforts to revive runs.

Because of the unsatisfactory conditions in the Columbia River and the lower Willamette River, the City of Portland and other communities which discharge sewage into the Columbia River are under orders from the State Sanitary Authority to undertake further steps to abate pollution. The City of Portland has been ordered to disinfect the effluent which it discharges in the Columbia River. It is also under orders to cease discharge of any raw sewage into the Willamette River and because the City did not act as promptly as the Authority thought it should, the City is now the subject of a suit filed in the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon by the State Sanitary Authority seeking a court order to compel the City to abate its pollution of the Willamette River. The State Sanitary Authority indicates it would be satisfied if the City would proceed with the proposed program if the sewer user charge increase is approved and, hence, it is not pressing the suit at this time. It fully intends to if the City does not undertake necessary action.

Likewise, the U. S. Public Health Service has stated that it will take legal measures available to it to compel the abatement of pollution if satisfactory steps are not taken by the city. For example, federal court actions are presently pending against Sioux City, Iowa, as a result of its failure to take requested anti-pollution measures. According to one witness, the existence of this legal controversy and the attendant publicity has had a very adverse effect upon the entrance of new industry to the city.

Sources of Information

Your Committee interviewed Mr. Leonard B. Dworsky, officer in charge, Water Supply and Pollution Control Program, Pacific Northwest, Public Health Service, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare; Mr. Curtiss M. Everts, State Sanitary Engineer; Commissioner William Bowes; L. H. Rosenthal, City Engineer, and personnel of the Oregon Fish Commission and the Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition, your Committee reviewed prior City Club reports and certain reports of the Public Health Service, United States Department of Public Health, Education and Welfare, relative to stream pollution abatement programs.

PROPOSED PROGRAM WITH FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE BY MEASURE

The present sewer user charge which is $\frac{1}{3}$ of the water rate brings to the city approximately \$1,050,000 per year. Of this amount, about \$400,000 per year is required to operate and maintain the present disposal system. Another \$300,000 is required for interest and principal payments against the outstanding bonds, leaving approximately \$350,000 per year for new construction. It is estimated that it would require \$7,000,000 to complete the present disposal system and, as can be observed, it would take a period of 20 years to accumulate this amount through the present sewer user charge.

Consideration was given by the City Council to issuing 20 year bonds in the amount of \$7,000,000 to raise the necessary funds. However, at present interest rates, the interest on these bonds would run to \$2,500,000 and the interest seemed to be an unnecessary expense. Accordingly, the council now proposes to increase sewer user charges to $\frac{2}{3}$ of the water rate which would make available to the city about \$1,400,000 per year for new construction. It is reported that construction in this amount is all that can be conveniently and efficiently handled in any one year and over a five or six year period the sewage disposal system would be completed.

The ballot measure is intended to restrict the use of the additional funds derived from the new sewer user charge to construction and maintenance and related activities con-

nected with the disposal system. This means that the money can be spent only for construction and maintenance of interceptors and sewage disposal plants. The money could not be used for construction and maintenance of trunks and lateral sewers.

The new construction contemplated includes interceptors in Guild's Lake and Linn-ton areas and temporary primary treatment plants in those same areas which would be constructed immediately. Ultimately, a single secondary treatment plant will be constructed for handling all of the sewage on the west side of the river and at which time the Guild's Lake and Linn-ton area temporary plants will be converted to pumping stations.

Portland is fortunate in having exceptionally low water rates and even with the proposed sewer charge its rates will be among the lowest in the country. The average household presently pays about \$1.40 per month for water and sewer service. The proposed increase would raise this cost by about \$0.35 per month. Thus, the total cost of water and sewer service would be approximately \$1.75 per month, which seems to be an extremely modest sum for such important utilities, particularly when it is compared to the amounts which average householders must pay for telephone, electric and gas services.

DISCUSSION AGAINST

Your Committee was unable to locate any organized groups or any individuals who voiced any opposition whatsoever to the proposed ballot measure here under consideration.

CONCLUSION

Your Committee believes that the City of Portland is under a legal and moral obligation to complete its sewage disposal system. The City Council is to be commended for its engineering program and economic solution to this important civic problem. The proposed sewer user charge appears to be a fair and equitable method of financing this necessary program.

RECOMMENDATION

It is the recommendation of your Committee that the proposed amendment to the charter of the City of Portland be approved by voting No. 53 Yes.

Respectfully submitted,

FERRIS F. BOOTHE
S. EDWARD BYE
DR. EARL DRYDEN
ROBERT R. KNIPE
KENNETH KLARQUIST, *Chairman*

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